UNITED NATIONS **S**

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1999/613
27 May 1999
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

LETTER DATED 26 MAY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TOGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Final Communiqué of the Meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), held at Lomé on 24 and 25 May 1999, which was devoted to the consideration of the situation in the Niger, in Guinea-Bissau and in Sierra Leone.

I should be most grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Roland Y. KPOTSRA

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Annex

[Original: English and French]

Final Communiqué of the meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs held at Lomé 24 and 25 May 1999

INTRODUCTION

1. The ECOWAS Ministers of Foreign Affairs met in Lomé on 24 and 25 May 1999 to consider the situation in Niger, Guinea-Bissau, and Sierra Leone, following the recent events that occurred in those Member States.

2. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs or their duly accredited representatives from the following Member States were present at the meeting :

   - Republic of Benin
   - Burkina Faso
   - Republic of Cape Verde
   - Republic of Côte d'Ivoire
   - Republic of Ghana
   - Republic of Guinea
   - Republic of Guinea-Bissau
   - Republic of Liberia
   - Republic of Mali
   - Republic of Niger
   - Republic of Senegal
   - Republic of Sierra Leone
   - Togolese Republic

3. The following organisations also attended the meeting as observers:

   - United Nations Organisation (UN) ;
   - Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

4. A list of participants is attached as an annex.*

5. The meeting observed a minute of silence in memory of the late Ibrahim Maïnassara BARE, President of the Republic of Niger.

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* Not included in the present document.

6. The Ministers reviewed the political situation in Niger, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone, and stressed the importance of democracy as a factor of regional peace and security, which are essential to the socio-economic development of ECOWAS Member States. The Ministers pledged the commitment of their Member States to the consolidation of democracy and respect of human rights. The meeting reaffirmed the need for all Member States to consolidate their democratic base, observe the principles of good governance and good economic management in order to ensure the emergence and development of a democratic culture which takes into account the interests of the peoples of West Africa. The Ministers therefore welcomed the advent of a democratically elected civilian government in Nigeria as a major political event which holds out high new hopes for regional peace and stability.

7. The meeting recalled the relevant provisions of the Declaration of the OAU Heads of State and Government condemning political assassinations. It expressed the view that no coup d'état, let alone a political assassination, could be justified by any situation, however unbearable it might be.

8. The Ministers recommended that in future meetings of Foreign Ministers be convened promptly whenever a Member State is faced with serious crises.

9. The meeting expressed satisfaction at the progress made in the preparation and implementation of the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Regional Security and requested the Executive Secretary to finalise the formulation of the relevant protocols within the shortest time possible.

10. The Ministers agreed on the following measures concerning Niger, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone.

MEASURES CONCERNING NIGER

11. The meeting unreservedly condemned the coup d'état which led to the assassination of the democratically elected President of Niger on Friday 9 April 1999.

12. It stressed the need for an independent committee of enquiry that would look into the circumstances surrounding the death of President Ibrahim Maïnassara Bare and submit a report to the Niger authorities and to the ECOWAS Executive Secretary as soon as possible.

13. The Ministers took note of the pledge made by the Niger authorities to do everything possible to ensure the success of the on-going transition programme by organising democratic and fair elections by November 1999. They requested the Executive Secretary to lend active support to the electoral process.

14. The meeting recommended to the Executive Secretary to participate, in line with the provisions of Article 58 (g) of the Revised Treaty, in the preparation and supervision of the elections scheduled to take place in Niger under the transition programme.

15. The meeting agreed on the need to assist Niger to restore constitutional order. They, therefore, appealed to the political parties in Niger to face up to their responsibilities and obligations in the process.

MEASURES CONCERNING GUINEA-BISSAU

16. The meeting condemned the coup d'état which led to the overthrow of the democratically elected President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau. The Ministers stressed that the coup d'état was contrary to the Abuja and Lomé Agreements.

17. The Ministers also condemned the killings, looting and destruction of property belonging to both nationals and foreigners, in particular foreign diplomatic missions.

18. They requested the new leadership to grant safe passage to President Vieira and his family from the Portuguese Embassy where they have taken refuge to any country of their choice. They also requested that political detainees if any be released.

19. The meeting expressed its gratitude to the ECOWAS Member States who had contributed troops to ECOMOG, as well as to the foreign countries that had provided logistical support to the West African force. The Ministers commended the ECOMOG soldiers for their courage and composure during the putsch.

20. The meeting took note of the request made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guinea-Bissau on behalf of her Government for ECOMOG to remain in Guinea-Bissau until the forthcoming elections are held. However, in view of the new developments on the ground and the difficulties encountered in financing the operations, the meeting agreed that ECOMOG be withdrawn from Guinea-Bissau.

21. The Ministers further agreed on the need for the Committee of nine to monitor closely the situation in Guinea-Bissau, as well as the observance by the new leadership, of its commitments.

MEASURES CONCERNING SIERRA LEONE

22. The meeting was informed of the pending negotiations in Lomé between the Government of Sierra Leone and the RUF. It observed that the developments in Sierra Leone were generally positive and expressed satisfaction that a Ceasefire Agreement had been signed in Lomé on 18 May 1999. The Ministers called on the parties to find a peaceful solution to the crisis, notwithstanding the complexity of the problems.

23. In view of the fact that the resolution of the crisis depended first and foremost on the people of Sierra Leone, they launched an urgent appeal to all parties to demonstrate flexibility and a spirit of compromise and conciliation.

24. The meeting also appealed to the parties in the conflict to create an environment conducive to the observance of the ceasefire so as to facilitate the deployment of the additional UN observers. To this end, they expressed their appreciation to the United Nations Secretary-General for having despatched a team to assess the logistical support needed for the deployment of the additional observers.

25. The meeting was informed of the recent incursion of Sierra Leonean rebels into Guinean territory, where numerous atrocities were perpetrated and property destroyed. It condemned such attacks against a Member State already faced with enormous ecological, economic, security and political problems caused by the influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees into its territory.

26. The meeting recommended that the meetings of the Committee of Seven be held on a more regular basis.

27. The Ministers appealed to the international community to provide ECOWAS with the necessary material and financial assistance to facilitate rapid resolution of the crisis in Sierra Leone. To this end, the meeting agreed that an ECOWAS ministerial delegation be despatched to the Secretary-General, the United Nations Security Council and certain developed countries to brief them on the recent situation in Sierra Leone and on the need for adequate funding for ECOWAS conflict prevention, management and resolution operations.

28. The Ministers also appealed to the international community to increase its humanitarian assistance to Sierra Leone to enable the Government tackle effectively the enormous humanitarian need created by the conflict.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

29. The Ministers acknowledged the importance of the rationalisation of West African inter-governmental organisations in the regional integration process. They, therefore, commended the decision taken by the ECOWAS Council of Ministers to harmonise the co-operation programmes undertaken by the West African IGOs in the economic and health areas. The Ministers encouraged the ECOWAS Executive Secretary and the Secretary-General of ANAD to rationalise the activities of their respective organisations to enable ANAD to become a specialised institution of ECOWAS for cross-border crime control, thereby avoiding any duplication between the organisations in the area of peacekeeping, ECOWAS being the only institution in West Africa responsible for the assignment.

30. The meeting underlined the need for all Member States to ratify and implement without delay the Protocol on the Community Levy so as to enable ECOWAS to obtain adequate financial ressources for its activities. The ECOWAS Ministers of Finance were, therefore, urged to pay the proceeds of the levy into the ECOWAS accounts opened for the purpose.